# Report on the Awareness Workshop on Seaweeds and Other Coastal Ecosystems

19–20 November 2026
Department of Zoology, University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka

An awareness workshop on **"Seaweeds and Other Coastal Ecosystems"** was organised by the Biodiversity Secretariat of the Ministry of Environment, with technical support from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Sri Lanka, on 19 and 20 November 2026 at the Department of Zoology, University of Jaffna. The workshop was coordinated by Prof. (Mrs.) R. Gnaneswaran, with the support of the Zoological Students' Association (ZSA) of the Department of Zoology, University of Jaffna.

The primary objective of the workshop was to enhance awareness and understanding among undergraduates of the ecology, biodiversity, ecological significance and conservation of coastal ecosystems, with particular emphasis on their importance to the Jaffna Peninsula.

The workshop was conducted over two days, comprising the following two sessions:

**Session I – Lectures on the Ecology, Significance and Current Status of Coastal Ecosystems (19 November 2026)**

This session consisted of lectures and interactive discussions covering various aspects of coastal ecosystems, their ecological importance, biodiversity and current conservation challenges. (Ex: mangroves, coral reef, sea grass and seaweed ecosystems)

**Session II – Laboratory Session on the Fauna and Flora of Coastal Ecosystems (20 November 2026)**

The second session was conducted at the General Laboratory of the Department of Zoology. It focused on introducing participants to the fauna and flora associated with coastal ecosystems through laboratory-based activities . including specimen observation, identification, demonstrations and discussions

The workshop was officially inaugurated by Prof. (Mrs.) R. Gnaneswaran, Coordinator of the workshop. This was followed by an introductory presentation by Ms. Nilmini Ranasinghe, Assistant Director, Biodiversity Secretariat, on coastal ecosystems and their importance to the Jaffna Peninsula.

The following experts served as resource persons and contributed to the lectures and interactive discussions:

- Dr. Manoj Prasanna – Biodiversity Secretariat, Ministry of Environment.
- Dr. Chaminda Karunarathne – IUCN Sri Lanka.
- Mr. N. Rathesh – Researcher, Blue Resources Trust.
- Prof. (Mrs.) Thulasitha William Shanthakumar – Department of Zoology, University of Jaffna.
- Prof. (Mrs.) R. Gnaneswaran – Department of Zoology, University of Jaffna.

Their contributions provided participants with valuable insights into different aspects of coastal ecosystems, their biodiversity, ecological significance and conservation.

A total of 52 undergraduate students representing the Departments of Botany, Fisheries, Geography and Zoology actively participated in the workshop.

The participants demonstrated considerable interest in the subject through their active involvement in the lecture sessions, laboratory activities and discussions. They raised several insightful questions, which were addressed by the resource persons, providing opportunities for knowledge sharing and further discussion on coastal biodiversity and conservation.

The two-day awareness workshop successfully provided undergraduate students with an opportunity to broaden their knowledge and understanding of different coastal ecosystems and their associated biodiversity. The combination of expert lectures, interactive discussions and laboratory-based learning enabled participants to gain a better appreciation of the ecological importance of coastal ecosystems and the need for their sustainable management and conservation.

The workshop also provided a valuable platform for academic interaction and collaboration among the participating Departments and External organisations, strengthening awareness of coastal biodiversity conservation among the undergraduate community of the University of Jaffna.

The organizing team gratefully acknowledges the technical assistance provided by Mr. S. Nishanthan, Technical Officer, and the laboratory and office assistants of the Department of Zoology, University of Jaffna, for their valuable support in facilitating the laboratory sessions and other arrangements throughout the workshop.

We also extend our sincere gratitude to the Head of the Department of Zoology, the Dean of the Faculty of Science and the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Jaffna for granting permission to conduct the workshop within the University premises and for facilitating the successful implementation of the programme.

Special appreciation is extended to the Biodiversity Secretariat of the Ministry of Environment and IUCN Sri Lanka for organising and providing technical support for this awareness initiative.

# Photos :

## Lecture session – 19th Nov. 2026 from 9.00am- 4.30 pm at Dep.of Zooloy



**Registration of participants**



**Books donated by MOE**



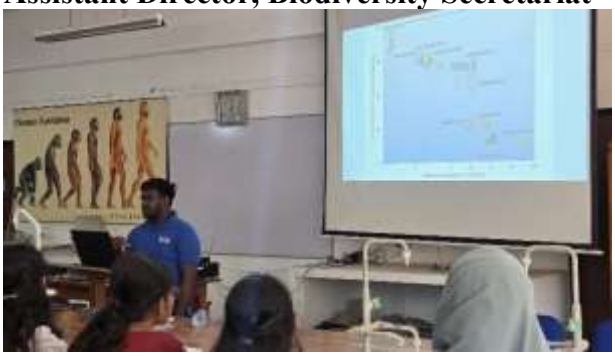
**Inauguration by Prof (Mrs.) R. Gnaneswaran**



**Lecture by Ms. Nilmini Ranasinghe, Assistant Director, Biodiversity Secretariat**



**Lecture by Prof. (Mrs.) Thulasitha William Shanthakumar**



**Lecture by Mr. N. Rathesh – Researcher, Blue Resources Trust**




**Lecture by** Dr. Chaminda Karunarathne – IUCN Sri Lanka




**Lecture by** Dr. Manoj Prasanna – Biodiversity Secretariat,

# Participants in action during the lab- session







**Prof. (Mrs.) R. Gnaneswaran**
Workshop coordinator and Resource person
23.11.2026